The Unitarian Christian

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EDITORIAL

The outstanding contribution of Christ's life to our present times is something that is not to be found in his explicit teachings but is implicit in his unconscious example. Looking at his life as a whole, we get the prepotent impression that this man faced the rather formidable problem of human existence with an enviable state of mind. He was actually glad to be alive. He found this world a place of wonder, beauty and promise. He saw in human nature much that was lovable, much that was loving, and much that invited his loyal confidence. He approached the eternal mystery of God, not as though it were something to be dreaded, but as though it were a kindly mystery, wise, benevolent, purposeful, patient, and full of blessedness for men and women. He met the obligations and exactions of life entirely without resentment or hostility, but with an instant acquiescence and a willing eagerness to conform, to fall into step with life's meaning, to do his full share towards the realization of that meaning.

In short, his greatest contribution to mankind is to be found in the spirit and temper of his own living: trustful, harmonious, zestful, confident, optimistic, grateful, co-operative, and above all happy. To him life was no duty, to be performed under the ponderous incentives of compulsion and fear, but a privilege to be enjoyed with ready gratitude.

Corroboration of this lies in the fact that the immediate result of his life was to turn Apostolic Christianity into a world-wide brotherhood of all races and tongues, whose members laid aside all suspicion and caution and treated each other with trust, friendliness and helpfulness. Even today we can see the sweet influences of that contribution in our prevailing Christmas spirit of mutual kindliness and sympathy.

The cynic may ridicule the fact, and say that our Christianity is seasonal, reserved for a brief spot of time. He is welcome to his laugh. We know that every Christmas is a discovery for millions of people; that two weeks of Christianity are better than none at all; and that among the converts of each Christmas there are those who refuse to be content with two weeks of Christian living, and feel that they must carry it on into the other fifty weeks.

C. E. P.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
Onward and Upward Forever

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The Christmas Story

As it was first read in English; translated by John Wyclif, 1382.

Forsothe it was don in tho dayes, a maundement went out fro Cesar August, ȝhat al ȝhe world schulde be discryude. This firste discryuing was maad of Cyryne iustice of Cirye. And alle men wenten, ȝhat thei schulde make professioun ech by him self in ȝo his cite. Sothly and Josep stizede up ȝro Galilee, of the cite of Nazareth, in to Jude, in ȝo a cite of Dauith that is clepid Bedleem, for that he was of ȝhe hous and meyne of Dauith, that he schulde knowleche with Marie with child spousid wyf ȝo him.
Sothli it was don, whanne thei weren there, ȝhe days weren fulfilled, that she schulde bere child. And sche childide her firste born sone, and wlappide him in clothis, and puttide him in a cracche, for ther was not place to hym in the comyn stable.
And sheperdis weren in ȝhe same cuntre, wakinge and keepinge ȝhe watchis of the nyght on her ȝlok. And loo! the aungel of the Lord stood by sydis hem, and the clerenesse of God schynede aboute hem; and thei dredden with greet drede. And ȝhe aungel seide to hem, Nyle ye drede; lo! sothli I euangelise to you a grete joye, that shal be to al people. For a sauyour is borun today to us, that is Crist the Lord, in the cite of Dauith. And this a tokene ȝo you: ye schulen fynde a yong child wlappid in clothis and put in a cracche.
And sudenly ther is maad with the aungel a multitude of heuenly knygthod, heriynge God, and sayinge, Glorie be in the higeste thingis ȝo God, and in erthe pees be ȝo men of good wille.

AN INTERPRETATION

Here is the Christmas story, according to Luke, as it was first translated into English, by John Wyclif, in the year 1382. That translation is highly significant, and this story is vastly important. Wyclif was one of the greatest English scholars of his time, and he did a courageous and progressive thing in translating the Bible into the language of his people.

The Bible had been locked up in the Latin Language, which very few people could read. And the Church of Rome claimed control of the book, and did not approve of the common people possessing it. That Church declared that the right to interpret the Bible was in her own hands, and that, apart from her authority, no man or group of men had a right to read it.

Wyclif, though a priest of the Church of Rome, resolved to defy these restrictions, and to give to the people of England a knowledge of the Bible in their own language. A large group of scholarly men joined him in this great adventure. They went out widely, among their people, with manuscript copies of the Bible, or parts of it, and carried on a wonderful educational work. In large measure the people of England came to love the Bible and to resolve to possess it.

This is the more remarkable because printing had not yet been invented. Slowly and laboriously, the manuscripts, for this educational work, were produced by devoted men; and England had a vital revival of religion which was lasting in its results.

This is not the time or place for a review of the progress made in promoting, among the people of England, a knowledge of the Bible. But one of the greatest literary and spiritual achievements of that movement was the production of the King James Version of the Bible, in the incomparable language of the Elizabethan period. It was published in the year 1611; and, within twenty years, men carrying copies of that vital book began the Puritan migration to what was to become New England. Here, today, we have many churches which were created by those pioneers. One major purpose of the leaders of that migration was to establish a new civilization *based on the Bible.*

A MEDITATION

Before the translation of the Bible into the languages of the peoples of Western Europe, the Prophet of Nazareth was but vaguely known. People heard of the theological Christ, but did not understand him. Imagine the thrill of English people when they received, by the hands of John Wyclif, the story of the man Jesus! And think of the effect on the minds of those people when they received this story of the birth of that human prophet!

Born in a stable! Cradled in a manger! Housed with cattle and beasts of burden! Visited by shepherds! And the shepherds told of a heavenly song of "peace on earth, and good-will to men". Here were human values asserted as they never had been heard before. Here was a new declaration of the possible glory of the common-place. And the story of the Gospels goes on to picture a man of physical strength, of great courage, and of measureless compassion for men. And we in our own time, and our own land, may well feel anew, at this Christmas time, the power that is within that ancient story. And well may we renew our discipleship with him who was, and still is, "The Way the Truth and the Life".

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

By Rev. Amos B. Horlacher, *Minister*
Church of Our Father, Rutherford, N. J.

Some years ago I met a youth in the back country of Vermont who, at seventeen years of age, did not know the meaning of Christmas. He was an orphan boy, reared in obscurity and ignorance by an aged farmer and his wife. I took the boy to his first movie and bought him his first coke! He could neither read nor write and had almost no comprehension of the meaning and extent of his country.

That a boy could grow up in modern America and be ignorant of such basic knowledge as the meaning of Christmas will shock some people and astound many. But on second thought this should not be so. As a nation we have become so involved in the commercial exploitation of the Christmas Festival, and so enamored with its tinsel and lights that I would guess that it is difficult for even an intelligent and privileged child to cut his way through the western trappings of Christmas tree, Santa Claus, electric trains and Christmas stocking to the realities of that "little town of Bethlehem" where on a silent night under the stars, "the hopes and fears of all our years" were gathered around a baby's manger bed.

In the years before Jesus' birth most men believed in God or had many gods to whom they offered prayer and sacrifice. But there was a wide difference in opinion even amongst the wisest of men as to what God was like. Some thought of him as wholly indifferent to man; others supposed him to be utterly mysterious and unknowable. Some felt he was cruel and ever watchful of human mistakes to visit swift punishment upon men. Some few, like the prophets, looked upon Him as just and good and even tho the tragedy and hardships of life sometimes appeared to deny this truth, that in the end good and true men would know it in their hearts. So they wrote in our Bible. But many doubted and sometimes even the prophets doubted.

And in all these centuries while men wondered and argued (for they did not really know) the life of the world went on. Empires rose and fell. Cruel men were raised to power and often good men were crushed to earth until they despaired for their hopes and dreams of a better and more kindly world. We know this story best as it is told about the Jewish people in their struggle with the might of Rome. Long centuries ago their forefathers had struggled against Egypt and Assyria and Babylon but now the power of Rome seemed too much for them. Some of their leaders abandoned the dream of a Godly nation and leagued themselves to the oppressor. Others fled to remote places to live like monks. Some fought back at night and by stealth, and still others tried to save their dream by following rigid rules of law.

So they lived, hating the Roman, sometimes hating themselves and each other, and each day sinking deeper into despair. But in all of this darkness there remained a hope that had come down from their fathers through the years. It was a hope — believed and yet not believed — that when a certain time would be reached, when the wisest of men were at their wits end for an answer to life, God would send an answer. Learned men had all sorts of ideas who and what the Messiah should be. Few agreed on details, but most felt that he would be born of the royal house of David and would therefore be a king — not a worldly or political king — but a king in the realm of spiritual and moral life.

So it was on the memorable night long ago, Jesus was born, the first born son of Joseph and Mary. His parents were peasants from Nazareth but it was said that because of the taxing they had returned on this night to their native Bethlehem. Not Mary or Joseph or any others, save perhaps Anna and Simeon, knew of the greatness of this event. Nor would they know until many years later when looking back upon what Jesus had said and done they arrived slowly at the truth that God had indeed sent his Messiah in Jesus the teacher whom the Romans had crucified.

There was little change at first but as the centuries rolled on, clearly and more clearly men came to see and know that the wisest and best of all men had been born on that Christmas day. And they know now in their deepest heart, as each Christmas comes, that it is only by following the truth that he announced and the life that he lived that men in our troubled world will find their way to know the glory of God in the highest and on earth peace amongst men of good-will.

A RELIGION FOR TODAY

By Ralph Lazzaro, M. A., Instructor in Church History and Director of Field Work, Harvard Divinity School

In the light of President Pusey's recent address at the opening exercises of the Harvard Divinity School, on which the Press has had a great deal to say so that there is no need for us here to summarize his remarks except to say that he held great hopes for the survival of religion in present times and in the future.

As a member of the faculty of that venerable institution where President Pusey's remarks fell on expectant ears, I have been aided in reaching some conclusions by the very character of our Divinity School, the staff and student body of which comprise some 140 men, representing many varied denominations.

One article scarcely suffices for a complete analysis of theological belief and practical application of such belief for today's faithful, but it is possible in this brief space to delineate the main lines of an operative framework within which religion must fail if it is to be vital for our day and for any time at all. I suggest that such an outline shall include the following four points:

(1) A religion, to have meaning, must be theistic, i. e., it must posit God.

(2) It must be universal and not exclusivistic.

(3) It must be administered by a learned clergy who shall speak with authority.

(4) And it must employ the techniques and methods developed by scientific inquiry, not out of a desire to conform to the world, but out of recognition of the value of newly discovered truths.

As for the first point, religion, to be worthy of the name, must be metaphysical. It must recognize the existence of a realm of spirit, the existence of immaterial and eternal things, and proceed from these to an acceptance of the existence of God. In the experience of all mankind, in various cultures and in disparate racial strains, thoughtful man, in seeking to explain the nature of the universe and the meaning of existence, has been led by logical necessity to accept the reality of a Power outside himself which his intuition first revealed to him. It should matter little whether or not we are able to measure by scientific and physical norms the existence of such a Being. It is sufficient to realize that faith in a God, whether he is demonstrable or not, provides a constant ground on which a morality and ethic may rest so positively as to allow no relativity and brook no denial. With an eternal power in control, our moral action springs from a more solid basis than Mark Twain would permit in his facetious epigram: "Always do right. This will gratify some people, and astonish the rest." Love of a God who exists ultimately as Truth, Beauty and Goodness, and who sustains moral values for mankind, can lead only to love of one's fellow man and thence to a recognition of the brotherhood of all men. In this is there salvation for humanity. The loss of a Creator-Father in latter days, and the substitution of State (with a capital S) for the father-image in totalitarian societies, has brought on the disintegration of the family tie and the consequent disordering of humankind, which has become disloyal, irresponsible and to a large extent criminal. If the rational mind can find no answer to Job's distressed cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him," let him turn to Jesus Christ as the exemplary revelation of God, in Canon Streeter's sense, at least, who asserts that "Jesus Christ is identical with God in the quality of his personal life."

Our second premise relates to the universalism of true religion. The modern tendency is toward specialization and particularization in every field of endeavor. Some of you may have seen the recent report in TIME magazine which recounts the sad story of what specialization has done to the medical profession, whose members are in general found wanting in other branches of learning, as against the golden days when physicians led the world as philosophers and learned men. Regrettably, religion today has lost force for this very reason of specialization. Now, it is sad to think that our own Christian branch of the religious world, and right here in our own United States, should be divided into some 260 denominations, "walled gardens of special privilege." In the broad lines of belief, these groups vary little indeed; it is the minor and relatively unim-

portant differences which set one group against another and effect an unhealthy partisanship: most usually it is the *form* and not the more important *content* of worship that becomes the divisive factor. It is not the variety of religious experience that I deplore, but the exclusivism and sectarian emphasis which a denominational label frequently carries in train that is abhorrent to me. My own Unitarian theological beliefs in no sense prevent me from enjoying the liturgical beauties of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Anglican Mass; they permit me a sense of communal worship with the so-called "hard-shelled" Baptists when I raise my voice with theirs in chanting the traditional hymns of "the old-time religion"; I am affected with the near presence of God in the awful stillness of a group of Quakers in their silent communion with God; and the sober reflections of a Unitarian clergyman, as he delivers his sermon in the bleak interior of an austerely simple New England meetinghouse, are stimulating to my mind. What I am trying to say is that all these are valid religious expressions and in no way mutually exclusive. The church of the future should see fit to vary its program and afford these varieties to produce a more complete worshipper and to release its adherents from the restlessness which the monotony of a set mode of worship can induce. Or, at least, a broader sense of tolerance should cut across denominational lines and make of Christianity a many-sided single thing. The cordial relations enjoyed to their mutual religious comfort by the students of Harvard Divinity School is for me the healthiest hope for the religion of the future. These men point demonstrably to the universal character of all true religion, as in various modes they share their common hope and communicate their wider and deeper sympathies. Sophia Fahs (in *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage*) expresses this thought meaningfully when she writes: "Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies. Other beliefs are bonds in a universal brotherhood, where sincere differences beautify the pattern."

My third point argues for the restoration to a learned clergy of its former authoritarian position in the Church. Religion today has lost its pristine force by a process of self-weakening in an attempt to conform with current trends in education and political sociology. Forgetting that by its very nature it is *sui generis*, the Church, with its representatives, has surrendered its freedom to speak with an authoritarian voice; it has capitulated to the methods of a wary world which hesitates to assert anything with definiteness and conviction unless the assertion is subjected to intense scientific scrutiny and demonstrated thus to be true. In the din of scientific arguings, in the noise of revolving cyclotrons, and in the confusion of atomic warfare, the clergy fail to hear the admonishing voice of the Psalmist (46:10) who urges: "Be still, and know that I am God." Accommodating itself to the physical requirements of the world, then, the Church descends from its former high position; it no longer feels itself capable of "feeding the hunger of the heart" and of being the sole arbiter in the moral and spiritual sphere. Its voice speaks in weak tones today. Yet the Church is not, to use Masefield's phrase, "too broke to mend." A dedicated and learned clergy which will utter with positive force what things it knows to be true is the only corrective here. The clergyman, as priest, teacher and particularly as prophet, need fear no rival in this world; he must once more assume the courage to say, "This I know" and "This must you do." He alone is the religious expert in his community, and his authority, if he is a true prophet, must remain unchallenged.

What then, you may exclaim, and with this I reach my final point, — Must religion turn its back upon scientific advance? Not at all! Queen in its own spiritual realm and touching life at all points, it can adopt the techniques and methods developed by scientific research and employ them to her best advantage. Religion shall be mistress of them, not their servant. The Church must reassert the faith in herself which the inscription over one of the medical buildings in Harvard University assigns to her in these words: "We dress the wound, God heals it." In the realm of psychoanalysis, for instance, where the tortured soul must turn to a psychiatrist for release, the Church can yet play an important part, and a more beneficial one for mankind at that, for where the psychiatrist can only remove neuroses and fears, religion can place in their stead a directed purposiveness and a restful hope. Again, the erstwhile tasks of the Church now taken from her by social agencies may yet be fulfilled by a religion armed with the latest technical advance, to the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. Then will the Church, whose special function is the cure and the care of souls, again be successful in its duty to bring peace and quietude to a disturbed and disquieted world.

WHERE THE CHURCH FAILS

By Rev. Charles C. Forman, Minister First Parish, Plymouth, Mass.

Aldous Huxley in his book *Ends and Means* (p. 260) makes this statement in an attempt at defining religion. "Religion is, among other things, a system of education, by means of which human beings train themselves, first, to make desirable changes in their own personalities and, at one remove, in society and, in the second place, to heighten consciousness and so establish more adequate relations between themselves and the universe of which they are all parts."

At first encounter the language of this definition may seem difficult or unfamiliar, but upon a closer examination we discover such a point of view is not alien to the best thought in our own Unitarian tradition. Religion, most of us would be quick to agree, is worthless unless it enables us to make certain changes in our personalities, for we cannot separate personality from character in this respect. And, likewise, there has always existed in Unitarianism the strong suspicion that a religion worthy of the name ought to make itself felt in good works and ultimately in the changing and improving of society. So much, then, for the first part of Huxley's definition.

The difficulty all of us are apt to feel is how we are to move from the theoretical definition to something concrete which we can get hold of in our every day living.

President Eliot's address on The Religion of the Future, which he gave in 1909 has, of course, been at the center of much interest since President Pusey's reference to it a few weeks past. I am told that the initial reaction of many Unitarians was one of disappointment — or horror — at the attitude expressed by the new president of Harvard toward the religion of his illustrious predecessor. But when we think of the tremendous changes in the world in every respect — scientifically, mentally and spiritually — in the last forty-four years, I do not see why we should be shocked or alarmed to be told that the old methods *are* old and the product of a world that, at least from our vantage point, was much simpler and much happier. The effect of two great international wars and all their accompanying evils and impact on the spiritual life of the western world cannot even yet be fully comprehended. Such a spiritual and intellectual upheaval as we have passed through requires a different cure from the one prescribed to President Eliot's generation.

On the whole the mood of President Pusey's address was reassuring to me, although I must confess that I do not share his interest in the ancient creeds of the church. The creeds do not offend me particularly by their statements, and while I have no intention of trying to make them acceptable to my Parish, I personally am not at home with the majority of the statements found there. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied with the historic creeds because of what they leave out.

A religion for these times and in our own particular cultural sphere must have at its center the person of Jesus Christ. The creeds fail at this point. They give us all the trivia about Jesus but omit the significant facts. They fail to make us conscious of the fact that here was a man who lived under conditions very familiar to us. He moved in a world that "was too much with him" and he knew the distractions and temptations that we know and yet he discovered how to be so filled with the presence of God that he was serene and composed and still occupied with the affairs of life. He demonstrated how different a life is when it is filled with the thought and presence of God. In the person of Christ we see how a man can die — if he has faith — and how failure by the world's standards is usually the one thing that succeeds. Is there anything that can speak to our time with anything like the force and appeal of the example of Jesus living and dying — not distracted and frantic — but with that marvelous composure.

The Christian church has failed because it has become so concerned with the externals of religion and with the minutiae of theological speculation that it has forgotten its simple virtues and faith. A religion for these times will have to recapture that spirit and demonstrate its power.

Within our own faith there is everything necessary for a religion of contemporary significance — everything, that is but the knowledge of its existence.

THE PLACE OF JESUS TODAY

By Rev. George R. Plagenz, Associate Minister, King's Chapel, Boston, Mass.

A religion for today must not neglect Jesus. I want to put that more strongly: A religion for today must give Jesus the primary place.

A speaker at one of our King's Chapel groups said recently, "If I had to choose between God and Jesus, I would take Jesus." Let us consider for a moment what he meant by that.

Religion is concerned with linking man to God. If it is going to do that, then we are going to have to think of God, and we are going to have to think of Him in terms of what we know, and in terms of the highest we know.

The ancient people conceived of God as power, and so it isn't unusual that they often identified Him with the sun. The sun was something they had experience of, and in a sense it was the most powerful thing they knew. Wipe out the sun and you don't have anything.

Or they identified God with the wind and the lightning and the thunder. These were forces more powerful than man which he couldn't control. Furthermore they were phenomena familiar to him. These he called God.

Later on, people thought of God in terms of righteousness or the moral law. Just as we see natural laws at work in the world, so we see a moral law at work in humanity. If we follow it, and obey it, everything is all right. If we break it, we tend to get into trouble. We recognize the moral law. We have seen it operate. We know what it is. It is the highest and best that we know, said some people, and they identified the moral law and righteousness with God.

THE CHRISTIAN POSITION

Christianity has done something else again. It has personalized God in Jesus Christ. And it has good reason for doing that. Ulitmately, it is personal relationships, more than anything else, which give life its satisfying quality.

Man's fullest satisfactions come to him through the affections and the heart. They come from personal attachments. They do not come from any great impersonal external force, or from the moral law.

It is people who affect us most deeply — who move us, inspire us, stimulate us, sustain us on a human level. It is not ideals that do this. It is personality. There is no greater power in the world than "one loving heart kindling another."

And so Christianity has looked for life's highest good — that is, God — in terms of the highest we know — personality.

BUT WHY JESUS?

All right then, you say, but why Jesus? Why pick him out as the person to represent God to us? Didn't Jesus make God personal enough in his teachings? He referred to him lovingly as Father, and with all sorts of illustrations from life, made God come alive as a person. Why isn't that enough?

The answer is simple: People found something even better! Instead of *thinking* of God in terms of a person, they *found* a person to fill that role. That made God even more vivid and appealing. They didn't have to *imagine* Him as a person. They *saw* Him as a person.

A missionary went to China once. As he began telling the natives about Jesus, they said, "Oh, we know Jesus. He lived here once. We buried him on a hill not far away."

It turned out that, a few years before, another Christian missionary had come to this Chinese village. He also had told the natives about Jesus. But here is the interesting thing. He so exemplified in his own life what he said to them about Jesus that they just naturally assumed that he was this very Jesus.

That was something of the kind of thing the disciples and early Christians experienced with relation to Jesus and God.

Jesus talked about God and what he said about Him seemed to them to be embodied in Jesus himself. Life, forgiveness and reassurance come from God, he told them. They found life, forgiveness and reassurance through Jesus.

Whenever Jesus was around — that is, whenever they felt his presence close by them — God seemed very near. Whenever they came close enough to Jesus to touch the hem of his garment, they felt something like the peace of God, and the power of God, and the love of God flood their lives!

People felt this intuitively from the beginning, but it came home to them with greater clarity as time went on. It has been the experience of countless of Jesus' followers through more than sixty generations.

Dean Sperry has said that Christ is "perhaps the simplest, the most credible and the most adequate statement" of God which Christianity knows.

"If we cannot say, 'Jesus is God,' " writes Dean Sperry, "then there is no fact in the world of which we can say with greater confidence, 'This is God,' insofar as the God contemplated is the God whom religion requires as the captain of our human salvation."

THE SECRET OF JESUS' APPEAL

In other words, the secret of Jesus' appeal to mankind has not been based on any theological dogma or proposition about his mystical relationship to God from eternity. He has been his own most authentic appeal.

People have come to know and love Jesus through the long centuries, and they have said, "The very reality of God confronts me when I come before Jesus." There is a quality in him that has stirred men's hearts, something about him in the presence of which men have stood in awe, something about the radiance of his face that has drawn men to him.

Their response has been the normal response of anyone who has an abstract idea of something and then sees it with his own eyes. "This is it!" they have said. "This is it!"

Some of these people have gone on to say Jesus is God. They have come up with all sorts of propositions and doctrines about him. But that isn't necessary, and never has been, although most of the orthodox churches demand assent to some theological dogma about Jesus. It is the ace in our hand that we do not require that.

CONFRONTING PEOPLE WITH JESUS

Our job rather is to confront people with this Jesus, so that he may do for them what he has done for millions of others, and change their lives over from what now seems unexciting and colorless and not at all satisfying, into something that is joyous and bright and quite worth having.

I heard someone make this comparison recently. You can say to a person, "Love is a good thing." And nearly everyone will agree. But it is too matter-of-fact a statement to grip people's imaginations. On the other hand, you can tell them the story of the Good Samaritan, and a laudable concept is turned into a living, moving experience. That's how we often bring ideas to life. We write novels about them, or plays. We tell a story.

And that is what a religion for today ought to do — tell the story of God through the life of Jesus Christ. Tell it often and forever, and say to people what the Gospel writers were always trying so desperately to say — that whenever Jesus is around, life seems to go better.

That is what the miracle stories would say, if we would let them. Instead, we read them as if we were reading Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*. The stories are not to test our credulity. They are to awaken our hearts to life's greatest reality through a wonderful story. And this is what the story is trying to get across: Christ makes a difference!

Let him into your heart, and into your life, and disregarding dogma and doctrine, see what he can do for you.

A religion for today must not neglect Jesus. I want to put it more strongly than that: A religion for today must give Jesus the primary place.

A Christmas Prayer

Almighty Father, at this Christmas time we rejoice in thy creative word, "Let there be light". We rejoice in the coming into the world of him who said, "I am the light of the world". May our hearts truly desire, and may our minds find, the road to Bethlehem. By the eyes of faith may we see him who was born in the stable and cradled in the manger. Like the shepherds may we hear, with the hearing of our spirits, the song of "Peace on earth and good-will to men"; and may we have faith to believe that the prophecy within that song shall be fulfilled.

May the people that walk in darkness see a great light, and even upon those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death may thy light shine. Strengthen within us the faith that the Kingdom of God shall be established in the earth; and renew within us the confidence that of the increase of that kingdom there shall be no end, but that all men shall know themselves to be sons of one God, and brothers in one divine family. With living faith in our divine Master we make our prayer. Amen.

OUR CHRISTIAN JOB

By Rev. Amos B. Horlacher, Minister, Church of Our Father, Rutherford, N. J.

President Pusey has advanced the cause of religion in the United States by his forthright statements made at the recent convocation of the Harvard Divinity School. There are wide areas of agreement and disagreement among thoughtful people about the particulars of his credo, but few will deny that he has set many people to thinking seriously about vital matters too long neglected or pushed aside in academic circles.

After reading his address I felt the urge to read President Eliot's 1909 address referred to in President Pusey's remarks and to re-read the now celebrated address of Emerson's to the Divinity School of Harvard. At the conclusion of my reading assignment, I was struck by the fact that all three men were speaking about the same thing, namely the nature of man. In effect, they were raising again the thoughtful query of the Psalmist: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

Recall, if you will, Emerson's two major complaints with the religion of today: "The noxious exaggeration about the person of Jesus, rather than center about him as the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of man" and "The moral law is not explored as the fountain of established teaching of society."

Throughout his address, Emerson called for a new knowledge and a new appreciation of man and said in effect that when man ceased to believe in the infinite possibilities open to his soul, as revealed and demonstrated by Jesus, not all the rituals and creeds that man could invent would even be able to bring life to that which was dead.

President Eliot many years later celebrated in almost lyrical prose the achievements of the 19th century man. And these he held were only the beginning. He believed in God and he felt that faith in God was most truly shown by thinking His thoughts after Him. This called for abondonment of myth and meaningless or confusing symbols. His entire address could have been written under Paul's famous words: "When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Quite clearly, Eliot was celebrating in the easy confidence of 19th century achievement the emerging spiritual adulthood of the race. Again his concern was with man and his wonderful potentialities.

But is Pusey any the less concerned with man than were Eliot and Emerson? I think not. He does not say explicitly, "I have come to talk about the nature and needs of Man," but there is no escaping that this was his major concern. He feels that man is a being who needs faith. Both Emerson and Eliot would agree to this. But what kind of faith? I gather from Mr. Pusey's remarks that the faith he speaks of is not identical with tradition, but it must be the logical extension of it in thought, symbol and practice. It may not be — perhaps must not be — the same faith but it must have a living and vital connection with what the body of Christians throughout the centuries have practiced, experienced and lived by.

He is not, I believe, as confident and assured of man's ability to live and progress without the help from a Source or Being outside of and other than man.

For myself, I find no irreconciliable conflict in the thought of these three men. Both Eliot and Emerson before Pusey challenged the widespread religious idea of "man and his works are but a filthy rag before the perfection of God".

But I can not quarrel with Dr. Pusey either when he asks us to look at the record and see whether man is quite the waster he is or was supposed to be. Like nearly every important concern of mankind, there are always many aspects or ways to look. I think it is good exercise to read and think over what Dr. Pusey had to say, but to avoid the pitfall of exaggeration and distortion I think the immediate rereading of Eliot's "Future of Religion" and Emerson's "Divinity School Address" is indicated.

"Our job is to confront people with this Jesus so that he may do for them what he has done for millions of others, and change their lives over from what now seems unexciting and colorless and not at all satisfying, into something that is joyous and bright and quite worth having."

* * *

The Holy Family

By Mrs. Herbert Lyman

Member, Editorial Board, Unitarian Christian

"This is the end of seeking. In this place
The eager mind may rest, and feel the grace
Of holiness; which no one understands;
By these bowed heads, by these pale, lifted hands,
By this most ancient, this most humble act,
By words of poetry, transcending fact,
By these fair angels, this warm candle glow
The Spirit worships more than mind can know."

Christmas comes again to call us to the worship of the Highest. How shall I give meet thanks to those men of genius who, through purest poetry, sublimest music, richest painting, revealed the mystery of Creation in the human terms of the Holy Family? Humanity's noblest powers drew together to celebrate the theme that Creation was divine, that in life was a grace that treasured the helpless — the unexpected, the beginnings; and gave to these power of growth to reach the heights of majesty and fulfillment.

Joyfully and simply the everlasting blessing of Christmas came to the hearts of mankind. Thereafter every child born into the world might be bathed in its light, every mother sanctified, every father purified within the circle where love was declared ruler, where the Star of Promise shone round all men. Gifts and melody and wonder wove the glad tidings of great joy.

Today the glad tidings sound again. Again the bells call us to ring in the new. Once more Christendom looks back to the first Christmas, and with all the new knowledge of the good the ages store, sings anew its carols, praising God in the Highest.

As the world gathers reverently before the mystery of the Holy Family it receives into its heart the understanding that God's gift of a Holy Child may come anywhere on the earth where love is hallowed to receive it. For the human spirit is putting on the vestments of fraternity, and the bright star of hope that led the men of old to Bethlehem will shine on till it leads to one holy family of all mankind, with peace on earth, goodwill among men.

"Break forth, O beauteous heavenly Light."

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